SCS custody case

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Georgetown, Guyana

L. P. (440)

January 18, 1978 23 JAN 1978

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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Ms. Elizabeth Powers
CA/SCS/WW
Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Dear Ms. Powers:

I understand from seeing your name at the bottom of several replies to Congressional inquiries that you are "stuck" with the John Stoen custody case.

I am enclosing a memorandum for the file concerning a report that I did on an initial visa problem encountered by Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Stoen on January 7, 1978. I won't go into details on the latest visa problem of the Stoens since you are aware of it by now via our telegrams.

Frankly, at this point I feel like a tennis ball who keeps being hit from one side to the other. Obviously, no matter what we do one side will complain of favoritism. However, I do believe it is important that we keep in touch since I'm afraid the Stoen case and People's Temple problems will be with us for awhile.

I plan to be in Washington in March on leave and I will drop in for a short visit to give you my impressions of the whole sordid mess.

If you have any questions or need clarification on any matter please let me know. One last note, the Ambassador thought your response to Congressman Ryan was very well done. All the best.

Sincerely,

Dick

Richard A. Mc Coy
American Consul

Enclosure:
As stated above

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File

January 11, 1978

CONS/RAMcCoy

PROTECTIVE SERVICES: VISA PROBLEM - GRACE & TIMOTHY STOEN

While I was at the Supreme Court Saturday Morning, January 7, three Guyanese immigration inspectors appeared at the Court. Since all three inspectors were known to me, the Senior Inspector approached me and asked if Mr. and Mrs. Stoen were present at the Court. I replied they were and asked what was the problem. The Senior Inspector replied that the People's Temple had called Immigration Headquarters and stated that the Stoens were no longer members of their organization. After checking their entry record the Chief Immigration Officer learned that the Stoens had received entry visas valid for one month rather than two weeks that is normal. The Inspector continued that the Stoens must appear at the Immigration Headquarters to resolve this matter. When I inquired further the Senior Inspector mentioned that members of organizations were permitted to enter Guyana as tourists for a period of one month - all other unattached individuals are only permitted to enter for a two-week period after which they must apply for an extension of stay. The Inspector continued that this period accorded organizations, not only pertained to the People's Temple but also included other church and non religious organizations registered with the Guyanese Immigration Service. The Inspector commented that he could not understand such tactics by an organization spying on people coming into the country. He thought there must be something inherently wrong with such a group who resorted to such activity. When I indicated the desire to immediately telephone the Chief Immigration Officer, the Inspector recommended against this and suggested that since I was well known to the Superintendent that I could just bring Mr. and Mrs. Stoen to Immigration Headquarters before 12 o'clock that morning. I agreed to do so and the immigration inspectors departed.

At 11:35 a.m. I arranged to have Mr. and Mrs. Stoen leave the judge's chambers where the hearing was taking place and accompanied them to Immigration Headquarters. Superintendent Theo George, the Senior GOG Immigration Officer, explained the problem to Mr. and Mrs. Stoen and assured them there would be no difficulty in changing their visas from one month to two weeks, with the possibility of an extension for an additional two weeks, if necessary.

Mr. and Mrs. Stoen both explained to Superintendent George that they had not misrepresented themselves as being members of the People's Temple upon entry into Guyana and had in fact, emphasized to the officer at Timehri Airport that they were entering the country to regain the custody of their son from the People's Temple. At this point I remarked to Superintendent George that as the American Consul I believed Mr. and Mrs. Stoen should be permitted to remain in Guyana while the court case was proceeding since their presence was vital in their attempt to regain custody of their son. The Superintendent replied that it is only justice and reassured the Stoens that he did not see any problem in this. Superintendent George then informed the Stoens of who they must see if they required an additional two weeks extension of their stay. We then departed after Superintendent George told Mr. and Mrs. Stoen they could return to Immigration Headquarters on either January 9 or 10 to pick up their passports with their new visas.

COMMENT:

The Stoens believed that this was an obvious harrassment tactic directed against them by the People's Temple organization. They believe there will be other activity including the possibility of actual physical assault by members of the People's Temple in an attempt to cause them to depart Guyana and leave their son in the custody of members of the organization. I assured them that Superintendent George was a dedicated, honest Government employee and that to the best of my knowledge he would not be a party to any attempt to have them forced out of Guyana under a legal technicality. I pointed out to the Stoens that was the reason I had them leave the judge's chambers to insure they were at Immigration Headquarters before 12 noon so there could be no cause for any further problem relating to this matter.

c.c. Ambassador
DCM
ARA/CAR/GY/Tumminia
CA/SCS/E. A. Powers

CONS:RAMcCoy:ddh